Unit .04

Session .05

God Frees His People

Scripture

Exodus 7:14-18; 12:3-8,12-13,29-32

14 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is hard: He refuses to let the people go. **15** Go to Pharaoh in the morning. When you see him walking out to the water, stand ready to meet him by the bank of the Nile. Take in your hand the staff that turned into a snake. **16** Tell him: The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has sent me to tell you: Let my people go, so that they may worship me in the wilderness, but so far you have not listened. **17** This is what the Lord says: Here is how you will know that I am the Lord. Watch. I am about to strike the water in the Nile with the staff in my hand, and it will turn to blood. **18** The fish in the Nile will die, the river will stink, and the Egyptians will be unable to drink water from it." … **3** "Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month they must each select an animal of the flock according to their fathers' families, one animal per family. **4** If the household is too small for a whole animal, that person and the neighbor nearest his house are to select one based on the combined number of people; you should apportion the animal according to what each will eat. **5** You must have an unblemished animal, a year-old male; you may take it from either the sheep or the goats. **6** You are to keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembly of the community of Israel will slaughter the animals at twilight. **7** They must take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses where they eat them. **8** They are to eat the meat that night; they should eat it, roasted over the fire along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs." … **12** "I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night and strike every firstborn male in the land of Egypt, both people and animals. I am the Lord; I will execute judgments against all the gods of Egypt. **13** The blood on the houses where you are staying will be a distinguishing mark for you; when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No plague will be among you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt." … **29** Now at midnight the Lord struck every firstborn male in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the prisoner who was in the dungeon, and every firstborn of the livestock. **30** During the night Pharaoh got up, he along with all his officials and all the Egyptians, and there was a loud wailing throughout Egypt because there wasn't a house without someone dead. **31** He summoned Moses and Aaron during the night and said, "Get out immediately from among my people, both you and the Israelites, and go, worship the Lord as you have said. **32** Take even your flocks and your herds as you asked and leave, and also bless me."

Intro Options

Main Point:
God's people are saved through a substitute.

Option 1

Begin the session by playing a game of Simon Says. Before you begin, announce that the person who wins the game will be awarded $50. Play until one student wins. However, instead of awarding the winner with real money, give him or her a $50 bill of play money from a board game. Ask the winner the following questions:

- **Did you have any doubts about whether or not I would actually provide such a large prize? What was your reaction when you didn't receive the prize you were promised?**

Reward a real prize to the student for being a good sport. (*Tip: A $5 gift card is a great option.*)

- **What is one promise someone made to you and kept? How did that strengthen your relationship with that person?**

Point out that God never fails to keep His promises. There isn't a single promise in the Bible He has broken.

Option 2

Think about the word *substitute*. Without substitute teachers, classes would be canceled and students would fall behind in their studies. Subs allow members of sports teams to rest, preventing injury and sloppy play. Even in cooking, substitutes allow us to modify recipes for people with allergies, sensitivities, or the desire to make healthier choices. In most cases, substitutes are a good thing.

- **Think of a time when someone subbed in for you or your teacher or you were allowed to make a different decision about a meal or product. What were some positive and negative things you experienced?**

More than saving the energy of a team member or the frustration of a teacher, the substitute in today's passage saved lives. The Passover lamb provided protection from death of the first born among God's people. Later, God would send a substitute for all of us, for all of our sins—Jesus, the final Passover Lamb.

TEACHING PLAN

Having been charged by God to go to Pharaoh, Moses stopped offering excuses and obeyed. God sent Aaron to join Moses, and the two assembled the elders of the Israelites and performed the signs God had given them. Then, Moses and Aaron took the Lord's message to Pharaoh, but he refused to let God's people go. Instead, he made the people's work more difficult. However, God's rescue mission was far from finished.

Read Exodus 7:14-18.

Most people have understood the plagues in the Exodus narrative to be about judgment from God on the Egyptians or God flexing His power in front of Pharaoh. While those aspects are part of the story, there is something more profound here. The plagues fell on all the areas of life that were supposed to be protected by Egypt's gods. God put His glory on display by judging the false gods. He is the Almighty. God's first display of superior power is appropriate: a miracle on the Nile River.

- **In groups of two to three, list with three "false gods" our society turns to for security.**

The Nile was the lifeblood of Egypt. Essentially, Egypt couldn't exist without the Nile. It was responsible for transportation, irrigation, water, food, and the setting of the calendar. This type of catastrophe would be similar to cutting off all oil supplies, the stock market collapsing, drinking water being contaminated, and having no food in the grocery store—it would be total chaos. It's no surprise that the Egyptians worshiped the Nile as their creator and sustainer. At least three deities were associated with the Nile, but God totally humiliated these gods when he turned the mighty Nile into blood.

Overall, the dominant theme in these passages is this: "You will know that I am the LORD" (Ex. 7:17). God let everyone know that He alone is God. We must not miss this overarching theme in all the details of the plagues. God's desire is to be known and worshiped since He alone is deserving of our love and affection.

- **What are some idols in your life that God may need to confront to draw your attention back to Him?**

99 Essential Doctrines *(p. 48, DDG)*

God Is One

The Bible affirms that God is one, as seen in Deuteronomy 6:4-9, otherwise known as the Shema. In both Old and New Testament times, the advocacy of monotheism (belief in one God) was contrary to the surrounding culture. While most cultures practiced polytheism (belief in multiple gods) or henotheism (the worship of one god with the belief in multiple gods), the people of God knew, based upon God's self-revelation, that Yahweh, the Lord, is the only one true God.

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
God's people are saved through a substitute.

Exodus 7–12

7-12. In addition to comforting His people, we now get to see another way that God revealed His glory: by confronting false gods. Chapters 7–12 reveal God's judgment on the Egyptians through a series of severe plagues.

However, we must understand something bigger was going on than what we see at a glance. God was not only judging the Egyptians, but also the gods of Egypt. In Exodus 12:12, God said He would perform the last sign—the death of the firstborn—and in so doing he is executing judgment on Egypt's gods. This idea was later repeated in Numbers 33:4.

Each of the ten plagues was connected to a particular Egyptian god. For example, the fourth plague was about more than God bringing His wrath upon Egypt through flies swarming the kingdom (Ex. 8:20-32). It was about God revealing His power over Uatchit (the fly god of Egypt) and showing where true comfort lies through the discomfort of the plague. Similarly, the ninth plague wasn't just about three days of darkness (Ex. 10:21-29). With this plague, God demonstrated His power over Ra (the Egyptian god of the sun) who was represented through Pharaoh Himself. God was saying, "Your god is a fraud! As the Creator of all things, I created the sun. The sun answers to Me."

12:6-7. This passage describes what would happen to the unblemished lamb. It was to be killed at twilight. The slain lamb would be a vivid reminder to everyone that all deserve judgment. (See Rom. 3:23.) Consequently, a blameless life had to be sacrificed in the place of the guilty people who needed salvation. The blood of the lamb would be applied to their doorposts (v. 7). The obedience of placing the blood on their doorposts showed that they believed God would keep His word and pass over, sparing that house from judgment. So, Israel escaped judgment through this sacrifice, and salvation was accomplished by faith in the work of the substitute. The blood on their doors served as a sign that judgment had already fallen at that house. Just as the plagues were a sign to Egypt of God's justice and judgment, the Passover was a sign of God's mercy to Israel.

In Defense *(p. 49, DDG)*

Skeptics will often say Christian faith isn't rational or founded upon the evidence, but is the result of wishful-thinking. Of course, the way the Bible presents faith—and two thousand years of church history—nothing could be further from the truth. Faith has never been an intellectual blind leap into the dark, but has always stood on historical facts and evidences. Even here, it is reasonable to conclude that the Israelites needed to witness these miraculous plagues themselves in order to have faith that God had heard them and was coming to their rescue. While faith is much more than evidence, faith certainly relies upon the evidence and makes use of it. Historical evidences like the resurrection of Jesus are what serve as the very bedrock of our faith.

TEACHING PLAN

God unleashed nine plagues, yet Pharaoh remained unmoved. The Israelites were still slaves. Their situation had not improved; it had actually gotten worse. Any hope they may have felt at first had surely evaporated. Only God could provide the Exodus they needed and that is exactly what He wanted them to understand. God was not done. He would bring one more plague—one that would secure His people's freedom.

Read Exodus 12:3-8,12-13.

This tenth plague did not come without warning. Moses had told Pharaoh about this final plague (Ex. 11:4-8). By this point, Pharaoh should have known that Moses didn't bring empty threats. The ruler of Egypt had seen nine plagues come to pass before this one. He had heard God's words, only to later see God's power. There was no reason to believe this tenth plague would be different. Yet, Pharaoh's heart remained hardened, even if it put his firstborn son's life at risk. The final terrible plague was on the way. Unlike the first nine plagues, the tenth plague would not be reversed and the Jews would not be exempt from its judgment.

- **What warnings might we receive from God today when we refuse to listen to His instruction? What does it take for God to get your attention?**

Though the Egyptians were the oppressors and worshiped idols, the Israelites were not blameless. They were also guilty of idol worship (Josh. 24:14). Being an Israelite would not spare them from God's judgment. There was only one way of escape, to bring life to the firstborn sons of Israel who were slated to die. The Israelites were to take a spotless lamb—a perfect lamb, without blemish—into each of their homes, slaughter it, and then cover their doorposts with its blood.

- **Why was it important for the sacrificial lamb to be spotless? What did being spotless signify?**
- **The blood on the door was a public statement for all to see. How does this influence the way we think of our faith?**

Read Exodus 12:29-32.

That night in Egypt, each Jewish household took shelter under a Passover lamb, yet it was only a shadow of what they really needed. God would one day send a greater spotless Lamb, one who would introduce a greater Passover and spare the lives of all who find refuge under His blood.

Centuries later, before another coming judgment, Jesus celebrated the Passover meal with His disciples. That night Jesus took the bread and said, "This is my body, which is given for you" (Luke 22:19). In one sentence, Jesus reframed the meaning of the Passover. Jesus was saying, "I will suffer to give you the ultimate freedom from the bondage of sin and the curse of death." Ultimately, it was not about rescue from Egypt, but from sin. This greater salvation was not realized through the deaths of all the lambs slaughtered that night in Egypt put together. This salvation was realized only through the death of Jesus, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
God's people are saved through a substitute.

Exodus 12

12:8. The Israelites were also instructed to eat a special meal with the roasted lamb, bitter herbs, and unleavened bread. It would be a meal to remember how the Lord brought salvation on that night. In fact, generations of Israelites would continue to celebrate the Passover meal, remembering the salvation the Lord had brought in Egypt. They would sacrifice a lamb, remembering how its blood set them apart and provided a covering of protection from the Destroyer. They would eat the bitter herbs, reminding them of the hardships they had endured during their bondage. Finally, they would take unleavened bread, remembering how quickly they ate this meal as God brought them out of their slavery. In the Passover, God's people remembered what He had saved them from and the price paid to secure their freedom.

12:29-32. God began by striking down the firstborns of Egypt. He would end the debates with one cataclysmic sign. He judged all of Egypt without distinction. The cries in the land extended to all peoples. The Destroyer would go through the mightiest nation in the world like a knife through butter.

Earlier we read God's words to Moses, "And you will say to Pharaoh: This is what the Lord says: Israel is my firstborn son. I told you: Let my son go so that he may worship me, but you refused to let him go. Look, I am about to kill your firstborn son" (Ex. 4:22-23). Here we see that God kept His word.

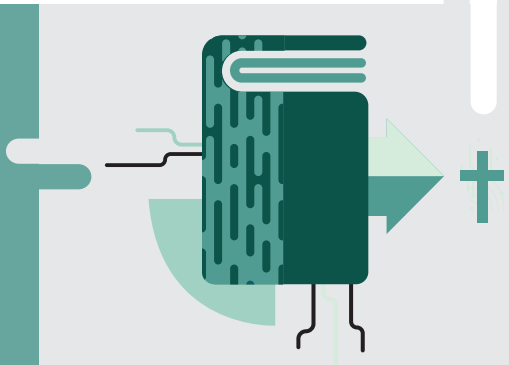
Through the tenth plague God also turned evil on its head. Pharaoh enacted an unrighteous judgment on Hebrew boys by throwing them into the Nile. Here, God enacted a righteous judgment on the Egyptians. Pharaoh's judgment came back on his head. In addition, by striking down the "gods" of Egypt—in particular Pharaoh's son—God told Pharaoh that he wasn't God and neither was his son. There's only one true God! This blow hurt Egypt personally through the loss of the son of succession and theologically as God's power over their gods was displayed.

Activity

After the lesson, instruct students to come up with a list of different professions like: wealthy businessman, professional athlete, doctor, Army Ranger, and so on. Next, assign each person one of the professions listed, then announce that a zombie-apocalypse is coming and their job is to come up with a specific plan for the individuals in that profession. After some time, let them share their lists and plans, noting what was different and alike. Conclude by saying that just like everyone in our example had to face the reality of the zombie-apocalypse and responded, so also the world must recognize that God's wrath is coming on us all, and we must respond accordingly. (The appropriate response is to rest in Jesus, our substitute Lord). to discuss how they should respond to these issues from a Christian worldview.

(p. 50, DDG) Christ Connection

Just as a spotless lamb was sacrificed in order to spare God's people from His judgment in Egypt, so also Jesus Christ is the Passover Lamb who was sacrificed in order to protect us from God's wrath.



GOD FREES HIS PEOPLE

God's people are saved through a substitute.

JESUS CONNECTION

Just as a perfect lamb was sacrificed in order to spare God's people from His judgment in Egypt, so also Jesus Christ is the perfect Passover Lamb who was sacrificed in order to protect us from God's wrath.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

COURAGE – Boldly doing the right thing, even in difficult circumstances.

HEAD

What message did God tell Moses to deliver to Pharaoh at the Nile River (Exodus 7:15-18)? Why would Moses need courage to follow God's command?

What instructions did God give the Israelites so that He could pass over their houses during the last plague?

HEART

The Israelites had to show courage to do exactly what God asked of them during very difficult circumstances. Moses had to show courage as he delivered God's words and warnings to Pharoah. How and why were they able to do it? Be specific.

Think of a time you have had to boldly do the right thing in a difficult situation when you may have gotten hurt, rejected or another negative consequence. Were you able to do it? How would knowing God is on your side give you courage in that situation? Explain.

HANDS

"Haven't I commanded you: be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9). Draw a picture of what you think of when you read this verse. Write the verse below it. Share your picture and verse courageously with someone who may not know that God is always with them, even in difficult circumstances. Be bold in sharing this truth.